

Salmonellosis

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What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is a disease caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. It usually affects the intestinal tract and occasionally the bloodstream. *Salmonella* bacteria can cause outbreaks due to food poisoning.

Who gets salmonellosis?

Any person can get salmonellosis but it is recognized more often in infants and children.

Where are *Salmonella* found?

Salmonella bacteria often contaminate raw meats, including chicken, eggs, and unpasteurized milk and cheese products. These bacteria are also found in the feces (stool) of infected persons or infected pets such as reptiles, chicks, dogs and cats.

How are *Salmonella* bacteria spread?

Salmonella bacteria may be spread by eating contaminated food (particularly undercooked eggs and poultry) or drinking contaminated water. Infected persons can spread the bacteria by not washing their hands after going to the bathroom and then handling food that other people will eat. Another way to get this disease is by having direct contact with feces from an infected person or animal and then transferring the bacteria to the mouth from the hands.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

The most common symptoms are mild or severe diarrhea, fever, abdominal pain, headache, and occasionally vomiting. Blood infections can be quite serious, particularly in the very young or elderly.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

The symptoms generally appear one to three days after exposure.

For how long can an infected person carry the *Salmonella* bacteria?

Most people carry the bacteria for several days to several weeks after illness. A small percentage of infected persons carry the bacteria for a year or longer.

Do infected people need to be excluded from work or school?

Most infected people may return to work or school when diarrhea stops, provided that they carefully wash their hands after using the toilet. The health department will assess each situation in which the person with salmonellosis is a food handler, health care worker, or day care worker or attendee.

What is the treatment for salmonellosis?

Most people with salmonellosis will recover on their own. Persons with diarrhea should drink plenty of fluids. Antibiotics and antidiarrhea drugs are generally not recommended for typical cases with no involvement of the bloodstream.

How can salmonellosis be prevented?

1. Always treat raw poultry, beef and pork as if they were contaminated and handle accordingly.
2. Wrap fresh meats in plastic bags at the market to prevent blood from dripping on other foods.
3. Refrigerate foods promptly; minimize holding at room temperature.
4. Cutting boards and counters used for preparation should be washed immediately after use to prevent cross contamination with other foods.
5. Avoid eating raw or undercooked poultry and meats.
6. Ensure that the correct internal cooking temperature is reached-- particularly when using a microwave.
7. Avoid eating raw eggs, and thoroughly cook all foods made with raw eggs.
8. Avoid using raw milk.
9. Wash raw fruits and vegetables prior to eating or chopping.
10. Practice careful handwashing before and after food preparation and after toileting or diapering.
11. Avoid chicks, ducklings, turtles, and other reptiles as pets for small children.

